

ADDRESS

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PRESENTED TO THE WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

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(GREETINGS TO HOSTS, GUESTS, FRIENDS, ETC.)

I WANT TO THANK THE AWARD COMMITTEE AND THE W.H.O. EXECUTIVE BOARD ITSELF FOR CONFERRING UPON ME THE LEON BERNARD AWARD. IT IS TRULY A GREAT HONOR YOU HAVE GIVEN ME TODAY.

THIS IS, AS YOU MAY KNOW, MY FINAL YEAR AS SURGEON GENERAL. IT HAS BEEN A VERY EVENTFUL 8 YEARS. I HAVE HAD A VARIETY OF REWARDING EXPERIENCES DURING THAT TIME, BOTH PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL.

BUT FEW HAVE COME TO MEAN AS MUCH TO ME AS MY SERVICE AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES BEFORE -- AND AMONG -- MY COLLEAGUES FROM AROUND THE WORLD.

AS A PHYSICIAN AND AS AN AMERICAN, I AM VERY PROUD OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION AND THE TIRELESS, SELFLESS WORK IT DOES ON BEHALF OF THE HEALTH OF THE HUMAN RACE IN EVERY CORNER OF THE WORLD.

I ADMIRE THIS ORGANIZATION -- ITS GOALS AND ITS PROGRAMS -- AND I HAVE HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF SPEAKING UP FOR IT, OF DEFENDING IT, AND -- ON TWO OCCASIONS IN NEW YORK -- I HAVE HAPPILY EXPLAINED ITS IMPORTANCE IN MAJOR ADDRESSES BEFORE THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ITSELF.

IN ALL THESE ASSIGNMENTS, I TRIED TO CONVEY AS WELL MY RESPECT AND AFFECTION FOR PEOPLE SUCH AS YOURSELVES ... THOUGHTFUL, DEDICATED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS WHO ARE DEVOTED TO IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF ALL MANKIND ... WHO ARE DETERMINED TO DO WHATEVER YOU CAN TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN EVERYWHERE.

I KNOW THAT MANY OF YOU MUST OFTEN ACCOMPLISH YOUR TASKS IN THE FACE OF OVERWHELMING ADVERSARIES -- WHETHER NATURAL, SOCIAL, POLITICAL, OR ECONOMIC. BUT YOU DO. AND FOR THAT, MILLIONS OF HUMAN BEINGS ARE THANKFUL TONIGHT.

FOR THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS, I HAVE BEEN ASKED BY FRIENDS WHAT MESSAGE I MIGHT LEAVE WITH YOU ON THIS SPECIAL OCCASION. I GAVE THEIR QUESTION SOME THOUGHT AND, WITH YOUR PERMISSION, I WOULD LIKE TO SPEND A MOMENT ON THAT SINGLE MESSAGE.

IT IS LESS A MESSAGE THAN IT IS A LESSON, HOWEVER ... A LESSON I LEARNED OVER THE COURSE OF MY 8-YEAR ASSOCIATION WITH THE W.H.O. AND THE LESSON IS THIS:

THE WORLD WILL ONE DAY KNOW FULL PEACE, WHEN EVERY NATION WILL BE ABLE TO ACHIEVE AT LEAST A MINIMUM OF ECONOMIC HEALTH AND STABILITY. AND THE KEY TO THAT ACHIEVEMENT IS THE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF ALL THE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD.

SOME ANALYSTS AND CRITICS BELIEVE THAT THE REVERSE IS TRUE ... THAT YOU MUST ACHIEVE ECONOMIC STRENGTH FIRST AND THEN YOU CAN ACHIEVE AN IMPROVED HEALTH STATUS. IT IS AN ATTRACTIVE ARGUMENT ... BUT IT ISN'T TRUE AT ALL.

I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT THE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF A PEOPLE ARE THE KEY TO THEIR NATION'S ABILITY TO SURVIVE AND PEACEFULLY COMPETE WITH ALL OTHER NATIONS. THAT, TO ME, IS THE HEART AND SOUL OF "INTERNATIONAL HEALTH."

BUT I WOULD WANT TO GO ONE STEP FURTHER AND EMPHASIZE THE FACT THAT IT IS THE HEART AND SOUL OF THE HEALTH OF ALL NATIONS.

WE SPEND A GREAT DEAL OF OUR TIME, ENERGY, AND RESOURCES ON THE IMMEDIATE AND PRESSING PROBLEMS OF THE LESS DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING NATIONS -- AND IT IS FITTING AND PROPER THAT WE DO SO.

BUT I'M CONCERNED THAT, IN DOING SO, WE MAY OVERLOOK THE FACT THAT EVEN THE MOST HIGHLY DEVELOPED AND INDUSTRIALIZED NATIONS MUST IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF THEIR OWN CITIZENS, ALSO, IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN THEIR ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, AND SOCIAL HEALTH.

FORTUNATELY THERE IS SUCH A PLACE AS THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, WHERE ALL NATIONS CAN COME TOGETHER AND COOPERATE AND COLLABORATE ON ALL MATTERS OF PUBLIC HEALTH AFFECTING ALL PEOPLES EVERYWHERE.

WE HAVE DONE THAT IN A NUMBER OF VITAL AREAS. WE HAVE WORKED TOGETHER AND WORKED HARD ON INFANT MORTALITY, WHICH IS SHOWING MARKED IMPROVEMENT WORLDWIDE ... ON CHILDHOOD IMMUNIZATION AND ORAL RE-HYDRATION THERAPY ... ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF MATERNAL AND CHILD NUTRITION ... ON THE ELIMINATION OF SMOKING ... AND, OF COURSE, ON THE PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF AIDS, A DISEASE WHICH ALSO THREATENS EVERY NATION, REGARDLESS OF ITS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL HEALTH.



THOSE ARE SOME OF THE ISSUES THAT WERE ADDRESSED BY THE W.H.O. DURING MY ASSOCIATION WITH IT AND I AM VERY PROUD TO HAVE BEEN A PART OF THAT ACTIVITY.

BUT THERE IS STILL A GREAT DEAL LEFT TO ACCOMPLISH, NOT ONLY IN THOSE SAME AREAS BUT ALSO IN SUCH AREAS AS ...

\* THE MAJOR DISEASES OF MANKIND FOR WHICH WE STILL HAVE NO VACCINES: MALARIA, FOR EXAMPLE, AND THE DIARRHEAL AND RESPIRATORY DISEASES ...

\* ALSO THE AREA OF MENTAL HEALTH, WHICH NEEDS OUR RENEWED ATTENTION FOR THE BENEFIT OF MANY MILLIONS OF PEOPLE THE WORLD OVER ...

\* AND THE AREA OF THE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH OF WOMEN, A PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE WHICH, LIKE AIDS, HAS BEEN UNFORTUNATELY POLITICIZED IN SOME COUNTRIES SUCH THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO ISOLATE AND IDENTIFY THE TRULY SIGNIFICANT HEALTH ASPECTS AND DEAL WITH JUST THEM ALONE ...

\* AND FINALLY THERE IS THE ISSUE OF THE PERSISTENCY OF THE SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES -- SYPHILIS, GONORRHEA, HERPES, AND, OF COURSE, AIDS -- DISEASES WHICH CONTINUE TO WREAK HAVOC AMONG THE PEOPLES OF THE MOST HIGHLY DEVELOPED NATIONS, AS WELL AS AMONG THOSE IN THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD.

THESE ARE MAJOR ISSUES FOR THE W.H.O. AGENDA IN COMING YEARS. IT IS ALSO AN EXCITING AGENDA, AND I SHALL MISS TAKING PART IN ITS ACCOMPLISHMENT.

HOWEVER, REST ASSURED THAT MY EXPERIENCES IN INTERNATIONAL HEALTH ... MY FRIENDSHIPS WITH SO MANY MEN AND WOMEN IN THIS ASSEMBLY ... AND THE HONOR OF THIS HIGHLY VALUED PRIZE OF THE LEON BERNARD FOUNDATION ... ALL THESE THINGS CONVINCE ME THAT, EVEN AFTER MY RETURN TO PRIVATE LIFE, I SHALL REMAIN COMMITTED TO DOING WHATEVER MAY BE IN MY POWER TO ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF WORLD PEACE BY ADVANCING THE FUNDAMENTAL CAUSE OF IMPROVED WORLD HEALTH.

AGAIN, PLEASE ACCEPT MY SINCERE AND HEARTFELT THANKS FOR  
THIS GREAT HONOR. IT HAS INDEED BEEN A PRIVILEGE TO HAVE BEEN  
YOUR COLLEAGUE FOR 8 YEARS ... A PRIVILEGE AND AN HONOR.

THANK YOU.

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